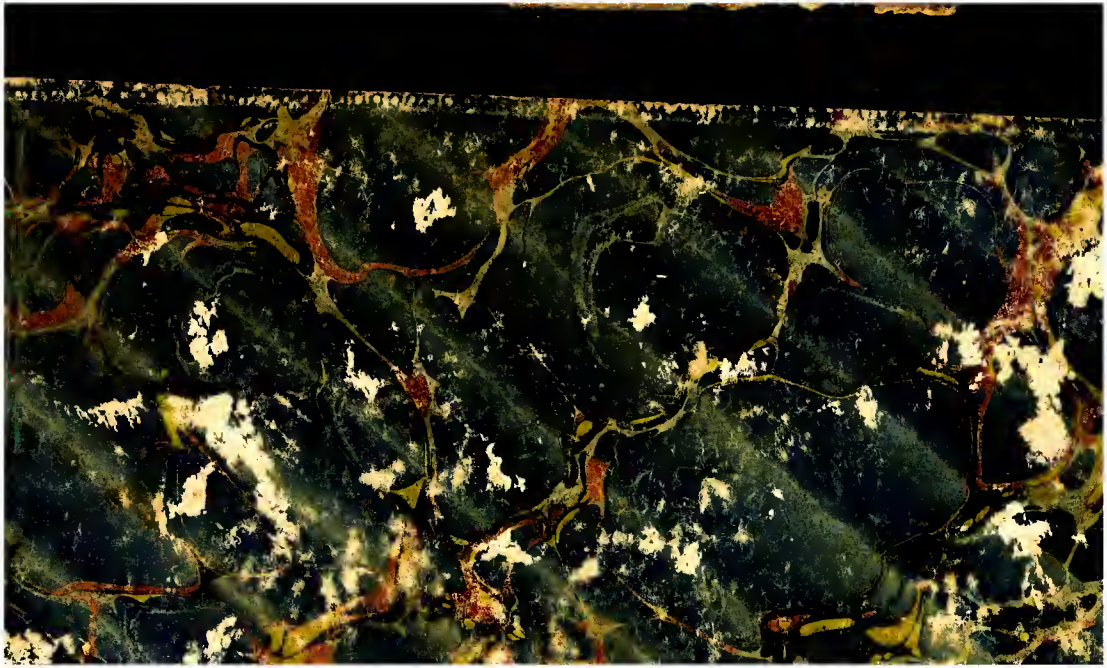

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"Black Jacob,"

A MONUMENT OF GRACE.

THE LIFE

OF

JACOB HODGES,

AN AFRICAN NEGRO,

WHO DIED IN CANANDAIGUA, N. Y., FEBRUARY, '84

BY A. D. EDDY,

Newark, N. J.

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JOHNSON, STEREOTYPER,
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PREFACE.

At an early period in the settlement of this country, while the slave-trade was vigorously pursued, many of the natives of Africa were brought to America and sold into perpetual servitude. While this class of people has long excited the interest and sympathy of the benevolent, but little has been done to change, essentially, their relative position in society. While a portion remain in servitude, others, though free, must meet almost insurmountable obstacles to that improvement and elevation which, under other circumstances, and in their own native land, they might probably secure.

Though this numerous class of men, as a body, have improved but little for many generations, there have been occasional exceptions to their genera. ignorance and degradation.

which show what they might become, under influences more favourable to their physical and moral discipline than they are likely to meet at present, if ever, in this country.

The question of their social and civil relation may involve difficulties perplexing and embarrassing to the Christian, but we know that the truth, consolations and hopes of the gospel are abundantly adequate to relieve the wants and mitigate the miseries of every human apostate.

From the most ignorant and wretched of mankind we are furnished with some of the finest illustrations of the power of truth and grace. Those monuments of saving mercy, while they in no degree detract from the value of religious instruction or the means of grace at all times and in all classes of society, may show the virtue of Christianity and the amazing love of God in overcoming the most formidable difficulties in the way of salvation

The subject of the following brief memoir

is taken from the most ignorant and profligate class of men, and the history of his degradation and crimes is given for the simple purpose of showing, not only what are the distinct features of human nature in its deplorable apostasy and to what lengths ignorance and sin will lead, but more specially to show what transformation of character may be secured by the proper application of the means of grace and the blessing of God upon the agencies of his appointment to save mankind.

Divine truth, when addressed to the most guilty, with kindness and sympathy for their miserable and lost condition, is seldom refused or despised. When accompanied with fervent prayer, and attended with the blessing of God, nothing is too great to anticipate. We may look for miracles of mercy and salvation

In the relief ultimately found from ignorance and sin, by the renewing influence of truth and grace, no excuse can be borrowed for moral delinquency, no palliation pleaded

for crime, and no encouragement given to such as may be repeating the hazardous experiment of indulged depravity. While one abandoned sinner lives to repent, thousands die incorrigible. While the grace of God reaches and secures one from the sentence of death, thousands are abandoned to the wages of unrighteousness, to reap forever the fruit of their crimes.

JACOB HODGES.

JACOB HODGES, the subject of the following memoir, was born of African parents, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, about the year 1763. The family, though extremely depressed, living in ignorance and poverty, were not, as it is known, ever subjects of slavery.*

Either from the poverty, ignorance, or wickedness of his parents, Jacob was suffered to spend his early years wholly without education or moral restraint. Under the influences of such a condition, and the common associations of poor coloured children, nothing of good could be expected. It is not known that Jacob had,

* The place of Jacob's birth is not certainly known. At one time he supposed it to be the city of Philadelphia, subsequently he believed it to be the city of Lancaster.

at this time, a friend on earth to counsel or to care for him. There were then no Sabbath-schools, nor such public provision for the instruction of the poor, as is now found in almost every community. The child of ignorance and poverty, wearing his sable complexion, in a crowded population, was ordinarily passed by with utter neglect, as the beast that perisheth. It is not known that a solitary lesson of useful instruction was ever given to this African child.

After spending ten years in his native place, exposed to all the evils of his wretched parentage, Jacob was shipped on board the schooner Lydia, of Philadelphia, in the West India trade, in the capacity of waiting boy. In this situation, well calculated to perpetuate his ignorance and to confirm him in every vicious propensity, and farther removed than ever from the means of education and moral improvement, he soon became distinguished for every species of wickedness that his circumstances allowed Being

sprightly, insolent and daring, he was, alternately, the source of amusement and the subject of abuse to the officers and crew of the ship; yet it would seem that he was capable of rendering himself useful even in this humble station.

In the capacity of waiting and cabin boy on board different ships, and afterwards as a common sailor, he continued for a great number of years. He visited almost every port in Europe, as well as other countries, mingling in scenes of degradation and vice abroad, till he acquired the hardness, enterprise and viciousness of the most dissolute seaman. And who is more reckless and abandoned than a homeless, friendless African sailor! Addicted in early life to every species of profaneness, the sin of intemperance soon followed. To use his own language, he was always profane and always bad.

After pursuing a sea-faring life till sometime during the last war between this country and England, the vessel in which he served was driven into New

York by a British armed ship, and he was cast upon shore, a destitute and abandoned sailor. During his whole life at sea he had not received the slightest education, but grew more and more immoral, till he was utterly unfitted for any useful service on land where confidence in his sobriety and integrity was demanded.

Being dismissed from service, and destitute of all means of support, his condition was as deplorable and hopeless as can well be imagined. How long he continued in these unhappy circumstances is not known. Being unable to procure any steady employment, or secure any permanent residence, he wandered through the country till he became settled in the county of Orange, in the state of New York.

He was now too old to receive the advantages of education provided for the poor at the public expense, and too ignorant and vicious to know its value. Having cast aside all the restraints of

moral influence, he had become confirmed on land in all the habits of vice contracted upon the sea.

Notwithstanding all this ignorance, vice and degradation, there was in Jacob Hodges a native dignity and a noble carriage, which clearly illustrated traits of mind which cultivation and better circumstances of life would have developed to the honour of our common humanity. Though strikingly African, every feature and movement of Jacob showed that he was originally fitted for a higher and better character, and but for the disadvantages of his birth, and the utter neglect of his early education, he might have been a man indeed.

How long Jacob lived in the county of Orange is not known; but an uncommon and painful occurrence is connected with his history here, which changed the whole aspect of his subsequent life.

In the town of Warwick, about seven miles from the village of Goshen, there resided a man by the name of Jennings,

who had already attained to the age of seventy years. By a process of tedious and vexatious law-suits, he had come into possession of property, by which another family was greatly disappointed and completely impoverished. Hostility, which had long existed between the parties, became every day more and more violent Revenge was constantly meditated and threatened. At length, the malignity of the aggrieved party was so exasperated that actual violence and bloodshed were not only meditated, but planned for speedy execution. The old man of seventy years was selected as the victim.

The individual whose pecuniary interests he had injured secured two accomplices, who, from sharing in his feelings of revenge, or from promises of pecuniary reward, entered into his purposes of murder. One of these was the poor, ignorant Jacob Hodges. He was selected as the immediate instrument of the fatal deed; as if murder, though perpetrated by other hands, would secure them from the ven

geance of God, or the righteous demands of human law.

It would seem that Jacob had been, for some time, in the employment of these men as a common labourer, and that for more than a year they had been preparing for the murder of Jennings. During this whole period, they were endeavouring to secure Jacob's consent to execute their bloody purpose. They told him directly, that "he was the very person fitted for the old man's destruction." They promised him, at the same time, their co-operation, and a large pecuniary reward. Jacob for a long time hesitated.

Another, and a desperate effort was made. The wife of one of the parties became an accessary. She was a woman who, till then, sustained a respectable character for intelligence and morality In her opinion Jacob placed the fullest confidence. She was now brought forward to persuade him of the justness and necessity of the act to which he was urged. Yet it would seem his heart

shrunk back from the bloody deed. He asked her, "if it would be right?" She replied, "Yes, for if the old man is not put out of the way, he will ruin my husband and brother. They are entitled to the property which he has taken from them, and only by his death can they get it back." But neither her persuasions, nor the repeated promises of reward, fully satisfied the mind of Jacob. He still hesitated as to his final decision.

To overcome his remaining difficulties, recourse was had to the use of ardent spirits, that fearful agent, which most effectually perverts the conscience and destroys the soul. From Jacob's long-established habits of intemperance, this course soon drowned all remaining sense of moral rectitude, and left him the complete victim of his seducers.

The wretched woman, alternately reasoning with Jacob and ministering to his vicious appetite, prepared him to engage in the work of death. He was furnished by one of the men with a musket, powder

and shot, and instructed as to the mode of executing their purpose. He was first advised to proceed by night to the house of the old man, and fire through the window. To this Jacob objected, as he might in that case injure other members of his family: yet he was fully prepared to meet their wishes whenever a favourable moment should arrive.

Early on the morning of the 21st of December, 1819, Mr. Jennings, the aged and unsuspecting victim of this conspiracy, left his family to visit some grounds which had been the subject of litigation, and on which the opposite party, who still held possession, were committing depredations. In his way, he passed the dwelling where the conspirators were met. Jacob was at breakfast, in the room of his miserable adviser, Mrs. T. On being informed that the old man was passing, he rose from the table, and took his gun from behind the door, while Mrs. T. brought him the powder and shot, giving him, at the same time, more ardent spirits, that

he might not shrink from his desperate purpose. Jacob hesitated; turning to her he anxiously inquired, "If it was necessary to proceed to business?" She replied, "It is time that the old savage was out of the world." Thus stimulated and urged forward, he crossed the fields into an adjoining grove, while one of the white men went forward in the road. Having overtaken Mr. Jennings, he detained him in conversation till Jacob came from the woods and joined them. The old man asked him if he had been cutting wood from his lot? Jacob replied that he had. He then inquired if his gun was loaded? Jacob said, No. His accomplice stepped aside, when Jacob raised his gun, and, taking aim at Mr. Jennings, fired at the distance of ten feet. The shot struck upon one side of the face, near the eye, and glancing, cut off part of the ear. Either from the effect of the wound, or from agitation, the old man fell back to the ground. In the opinion of the surgeon, however, who examined the body, the

shot was not mortal. Jacob, on seeing the prostrate condition of his aged victim, and reflecting upon what he had done, was filled with horror, and being about to go away, his accomplice ran to him, and exclaimed, profanely, "He is not dead yet; will you undertake a piece of business, and not finish it?" Springing forward, the white man seized the gun, and struck Jennings several times upon the head, till the stock was broken in pieces, and the old man was quite dead.

The body was left in its blood, unburied and unconcealed. Jacob returned to the house of Mrs. T., and told her what he had done. She appeared pleased, and gave him more ardent spirits. Given over to delusion and madness, she manifested no symptoms of remorse or contrition. It was not so with Jacob. Neither the attempts of the murderous party to convince him that he had done right; nor the promise of large pecuniary reward, with the power of stimulants, could quiet the agitated mind of this poor negro. He

was a murderer! The groans of his aged victim would not die from his ear! That gory head he could not forget! The broken and pallid countenance continually followed him! He not only carried in his bosom the conviction of guilt, but his whole conduct betrayed his emotions of remorse and anguish. Twenty-two years after this tragical event, he rehearsed to me its horrid details, and it seemed to pass almost in living reality and freshness before him.

He went to the chief instigator, who had employed him to commit the murder, and told him how he felt. It was not considered prudent for him to remain longer in the place. Immediate measures were adopted to induce him to leave the country; but he continued to linger about for some days, hesitating what to do; in part, from the agitation of his own mind, and also, perhaps, to secure his share of the promised reward.

On Saturday, five days after the murder, he was persuaded to start for Newburg,

with the view of going to New York, whence he was to proceed to sea. Though Newburg was but twenty miles from Warwick, he did not reach that place till the next day at sun-set. Fearing that he would not make his escape with sufficient expedition, one of the conspirators followed him on Sunday, and overtook him before he reached Newburg. Here they both lodged for the night. The next morning, Jacob crossed the river, with the design of hastening to New York, that he might ship for sea as soon as possible. The other man returned to Warwick.

By this time, the unusual absence of Mr. Jennings from his family began to create alarm for his safety, and search being made, his body was soon found where it was left by his murderers. The sudden disappearance of Jacob, and the fact that he was seen on his way to Newburg, in company with one of the conspirators, caused suspicion to rest at once upon him, and those who had instigated him to the murder. Jacob, in the mean

time, had passed down the river to New York, while all the others, including Mrs. T., were arrested and imprisoned. Vigorous measures were adopted to secure Jacob. Two parties were sent in pursuit of him; one of which traced him to New York, where he was arrested and returned up the river to Haverstraw.

Jacob at first denied having any knowledge of the murder, but appeared greatly distressed. He continued firm in his denial, resisting the solicitation and advice of his attendants, till the latter part of the night following his arrest, when he made a full confession, and gave a minute relation of the whole transaction. This he repeated in all his subsequent conversations and critical examinations in court. He also gave to me the same account substantially, as late as the summer of 1841.

From Haverstraw he was taken to Goshen, and after being examined before five magistrates, was fully committed to

await his trial, at the next session of the court of oyer and terminer.

At this court, indictments were found by the grand jury against the three white men, Jacob, and Mrs. T., for the wilful murder of Jennings. Upon the trial of the white men and Mrs. T., Jacob was the chief witness on the part of the prosecution. His testimony commences as follows: "About one year ago, one of the prisoners told me that I was a fit person to destroy Jennings. Another said to me, I wish I had killed him, and in the evening he requested me to do it. During the sitting of the court, last fall, two of them several times spoke to me, and wished I would do it; and told me not to let my mind fail me, for I should have spirits enough; that T. and D. would assist me, and would divide one thousand dollars between them and me. On Thursday, before the murder, after an hour's conversation, I agreed to kill Jennings. On Saturday, C. loaded the gun, and showed me how to do it. When the sun was about an

hour high, I went towards T.'s with the gun. (T. was the one who was to assist me in the murder.) He was gone to New York. I conversed with Mrs. T. and D about the murder. They both approved of it, and D. said that he would assist me. Mrs. T. gave me some whisky, and told me to help myself when I wanted. The next day Mrs. T. went to meeting, and told me to make free use of the whisky. On Monday morning, when I was at breakfast, D. came in and told me that Jennings was passing. I arose from the table and took the gun." Then follows, as seen from the records of the court, a full and minute statement of the manner in which the murder was committed, and the subsequent steps of Jacob's departure to New York, his arrest and return to Goshen jail.

The testimony of Jacob was direct and positive, going to criminate the four other prisoners. He was closely examined several times, and uniformly told a rational and consistent story. At one

time he was more than seven hours uninterruptedly under examination, and no essential deviation or inconsistency was detected in any part of his long and tedious statement. There was such a frankness and appearance of truth and candour in his whole demeanour, that the court and spectators were fully satisfied with the correctness of his story.

Though the parties all pleaded not guilty, the three white men, with Jacob, were found guilty, and sentenced to be executed on the 16th of April, following; and after execution, the body of Jacob Hodges was to be delivered to the President of the Orange County Medical Society, for dissection.

Mrs. T., when brought to trial, as she had seen her husband and his two accomplices found guilty upon the same testimony that was to be adduced against her withdrew her plea of "Not guilty," and as the purposes of justice did not seem to demand her execution, she was sentenced upon her own confession to merely a no-

minal punishment, viz. imprisonment in the county jail for the term of one month. In justification of this mitigated punishment, the court remarked, that the mandates of a stern and inflexible husband might have influenced her conduct in relation to the murder; but that however this might have been, the destitute situation of her children, already deprived of a father, so that she was now to be their only protector — the only parent to whom they must in future look for support; this and a variety of other considerations, pressed themselves upon the minds of the court, who had thought proper to extend to her all the mercy the law would allow.

The simplicity and honesty of Jacob's whole deportment while upon trial and as chief witness for the State, made a most favourable impression upon the court, and excited strong sympathy in his behalf. They saw that he had been led into crime by the deep-laid plan of wicked men, who had been goaded to desperation by repeated disappointments, and whom no

thing could satisfy but the violent death of their victim. The court saw that appeals had been made to Jacob's sense of obligation to his employers; and also that in addition to the promise of co-operation in the crime and a large pecuniary reward, his moral sense had been stupefied by freely administered stimulants. From these considerations, exertions were early made to save him from the fatal sentence that had been passed upon him. And some of the court, even while they felt that justice might demand the sentence of death, voluntarily promised to recommend him to the clemency of the legislature.

Providentially, the legislature of the State were in session at the time appointed for Jacob's execution. While the executive had the power of granting an unqualified pardon, the legislative branch of government alone could change the sentence which the court had passed upon him. Upon representations being made in favour of Jacob, his sentence of death was commuted to that of hard labour in

the State's prison, for the term of twenty one years. Another of the convicts had his sentence changed to imprisonment for life. The remaining two were executed according to the sentence of the court, on the 16th day of April, 1819.

Leaving the scaffold of these miserable felons, and this ruined and imprisoned woman, who had been instrumental in bringing misery and guilt upon a poor, ignorant African, we must follow him to his dreary cell in the penitentiary on Manhattan Island. These gloomy walls he now enters, a wretched outcast, a condemned *murderer*.

At this time but little attention was paid to the habits, education, or moral improvement of the inmates of our prisons generally. They were regarded more as places of punishment and means of restraint upon the lawless and desperately wicked, than as designed for instruction and moral influence. The idea of making them nurseries of education, means of moral reform, and sanctuaries for moral and re-

igious culture, was not entertained even by the Christian community. There was little of kindness, sympathy, or mercy felt for the prisoner. All was conducted upon the ordinary principles of strict, impartial, legal justice.

Towards Jacob Hodges, a miserable African, a murderer, there may have been some severity, owing either to his own refractory temper, or the character of his keepers. While, as he told me, he was not over-worked and had enough to eat and drink, there was nothing to win his confidence or to excite his better feelings. He was treated as an ignorant, abandoned, wretched murderer, who, though he had escaped the gallows, was undeserving of the ordinary kindness and sympathy usually extended to the less flagrantly guilty. We can easily imagine, too, that Jacob's prison-dress; the necessary associations with his past history; his strongly marked, dark African features, together with his stately, resolute carriage, may all have served to turn away all

sympathy, and to excite far other than charitable feelings towards him.

Upon the completion of the new prison at Auburn, Jacob was among the number of State convicts that were removed to that place. A new system of prison discipline was adopted at the opening of this spacious penitentiary, and the keepers appeared admirably fitted to carry out its details according to the peculiar character and disposition of its inmates. The superintendent of the prison, the late Mr. Powers, was a man of uncommon excellence of character, of remarkably kind feelings, and condescending to the prisoners He regarded them, though felons, still as men and moral beings, susceptible of better feelings, and capable of being edu cated and reformed. Every thing was here arranged for the purpose of cultivat ing among the prisoners a desire for edu cation, the means of an honourable sup port in life and the maintenance of correct morals.

For the first time in his life, Jacob was

treated like a man. For the first time in his life he felt that he had a friend. His heart was immediately won, his rough spirit was subdued, his generous and confiding nature was called forth, prepared to receive instruction and good from those who showed an interest in his sad condition.

No sooner had Jacob entered this prison and seated himself in his narrow cell, than he found a Bible by his side and himself alone. This was something new. He had never been in solitude before, where all was silence and solemnity. Here he had nothing to do by night but to review his life, to think alone upon his melancholy state and what might be before him. There lay his Bible, but it was to him a sealed book, yet it awakened a train of the most solemn reflections as he received from day to day some new lessons of instruction from his friends and keepers.

Among the first and most faithful of these was the chaplain of the prison, the

Rev. Mr. Curtis, who at once made himself acquainted with the previous history of Jacob and his peculiar disposition.

The chaplain was forcibly struck with his fixedness of attention and his grateful emotions at the kindness he received, together with that certain manifestation of human nobleness which Jacob always exhibited even in his worst days.

At this time Jacob was extremely ignorant, he did not know his own age accurately, and could not read at all. All moral and religious truth had been kept from him, and he was yet to learn his character and destiny as an accountable and immortal being.

The chaplain came to him with the Bible, and notwithstanding his extreme ignorance and advanced age proposed to teach him to read. The first lesson he gave him was the first word in the Bible, I-n. The chaplain said to him, That word is *in*. Can you see how many letters there are in it? Jacob replied, Two. He was then directed to look for the same

letters on other pages of the Bible, and soon learned to understand the difference between letters which resembled each other, till he comprehended their force when combined in words.

Being informed of the great truths which were contained in the Bible, which he might yet read for himself and more fully understand, Jacob was stimulated to constant exertion, till he was able to study out short sentences alone, which the chaplain in his frequent visits to his cell would explain and apply to his individual case.

It was not long before more than common interest was manifested by Jacob for his spiritual condition. He awoke to the melancholy fact that he was a lost and ruined sinner. It was from the faithful instructions of the chaplain that he received his first religious impressions, and they were from the beginning of a peculiarly marked and decided character.

He repeatedly gave to his friends a minute account of the operations of his mind and his religious experience while

in prison. One who was particularly interested in Jacob recorded his narration at the time he gave it, almost in his own words, and it has already been read by thousands in the "Young Christian," as an illustration of the power of Christian truth and the grace of God.

Being inquired of in relation to the crime for which he was imprisoned, how this sin appeared to him; "Very great," he replied: but understanding the question as relating solely to the injury he had done to a fellow-man, he added, "but not so great as my other sins towards God; my profaneness and intemperance." In giving this history of his feelings, he said, "When I first began to reflect in my cell, I saw my sins so great that I felt I could not be forgiven. When I told the chaplain what was the crime for which I was imprisoned, 'That,' said he, 'is one of the greatest crimes; but pray to God and put your trust in him, and you shall find rest to your soul.' He told me also

if I could not read, he would visit me in my cell and put me in the way I shall ever love him while God gives me breath. I shall love the chaplain for he put me in the way to gain the salvation of my soul. He made me promise him faithfully that I would go to God and try to find mercy; and yet I had doubt in my heart, my sin was so heavy, whether I should be forgiven.

"The chaplain soon left me, and I went into my cell and poured out my heart to God to have mercy on me. The more I prayed, the more miserable I grew, the heavier and heavier were my sins.

"The next day I requested an individual to read to me a chapter, and as God would have it, he turned to the 55th chapter of Isaiah. It said, 'Every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye and buy wine and milk without price.'

"He read along where it says, 'Let the wicked man forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him

return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and unto our God, for he will abundantly pardon: For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are my ways your ways, saith the Lord For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.'

"I found this gave me great encouragement to go on to pray, to see if I could find relief from all my troubles—the load of sin that was on my heart. I thought and prayed, and the more I prayed the more wretched I grew; the heavier my sins appeared to be.

"A night or two after this, the chaplain came to my cell, and asked me how I felt. I told him my sins were greater than I could bear—so guilty—so heavy. He asked me if I thought praying would make my sins any less. I gave him no answer. He soon left me, and I went again to prayer. I was almost fit to expire." At this time, Jacob had but just

begin to learn the nature of sin, and his relations to God and his holy law. As he looked back upon his feelings, he adds "In all my sorrows, I had not a right sorrow. My sorrow was, because I had sinned against man."

"The Sunday following," he proceeds to say, "just after I had carried my dinner to my cell, I put my dinner down, and went to prayer. I rose, and just as I rose from prayer, the chaplain was at the door. 'We are all guilty creatures,' he said to me, 'and we cannot be saved, except God, for Christ's sake, will save us. If we pray and go to God, we must go in the name of Jesus Christ. If we expect to be saved, we must be saved through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ.' Then I picked up encouragement.

"'The sins which you have committed,' he went on to say, 'are against your fellow-creatures, but they are much more against God.' Now, I never knew before that they were against God. When the chaplain left me I went to prayer again. I

could eat nothing that day. I did not eat a mouthful.

"I recollected at that time, that a minister had told me whenever I had a chapter read, to have the fifty-first psalm. I could not see any body to get to read it, and how to find it I did not know. The Sunday following, before the keeper unlocked the door, I rose up, and I went to prayer, and I prayed: 'O Lord, thou knowest I am ignorant; brought up in ignorance. Thou knowest my bringing up. Nothing is too hard for thee to do. May it please thee, O Lord, to show me that chapter, that I may read it with understanding. I rose up from prayer, and went to my Bible and took it up. I began at the first psalm, and turned over and counted every psalm, and it appeared to me that God was with me, and I counted right to the fifty-first psalm. I could read a little, and I began to spell—H-a-v-e m-e-r-c-y, &c. I looked over the psalm, and spelled it and read it, and then put the Bible down and fell upon my knees:

Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities and cleanse me from my sins; for my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight; that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest and clear when thou judgest.'

"When I came to the words, Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, I was struck dumb. I could not say any more at that time. I fell upon my knees, and prayed to God to have mercy on me for Christ's sake. But I only grew more and more miserable. The load of my sins was heavier and heavier. All that I had ever done came plain and open in my sight, and I was led to see that I must perish. There was no help for me. All my sins was upon my own head."

Jacob was fully sensible of the ignorance in which he had grown up, and the manner in which he had been led astray and tempted to the commission of sin, yet

none of the circumstances attending his crimes ever induced him to plead the least justification. His clear perceptions of sin and deep agony of heart, arose from the conviction that he had offended not against man alone, but against God. It was this that caused his "load of sin to grow heavier and heavier."

For some time there was, apparently, no change in the character of his feelings. All was constant reflection, intense study, deep feeling, bordering on despair. The fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, and what the chaplain had told him of the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ, served to keep his mind still inquiring for relief. At length, as he himself described it, "One day, when I was praying in my cell, my burden of guilt was removed. I felt that I might be pardoned through Jesus Christ."

The relief which this gave him seems to have been almost indescribable. Every thing wore a new aspect. Even the gloomy prison seemed a cheerful and happy place. His expressions of joy

would appear almost extravagant to any person not sufficiently acquainted with the human mind to understand how the whole aspect of external objects will be controlled by the emotions which reign in the heart.*

The narrative which Jacob, at that time, gave of his feelings and change of mind, concludes as follows: "Ever since, this place, where I have been confined, has been to me more like a palace than a prison. Every thing goes agreeable. I find I have a deceitful heart, but Jesus tells me if I lack knowledge, he will always lend. I cast my care on him and not forget to pray. It is my prayer, morning and evening, that I may hold out. If I die here, Lord, let me die in thine arms. I have great reason to bless his institution, and every stone in it."

The faithful instructions which Jacob received from the chaplain, were followed by the exercises of the Sabbath-school, and

* Young Christian, p. 178.

the public preaching on the Lord's day To all these, he gave the most strict atten tion. Considering his age and past habits of life, his improvement was really astonishing. In nothing was his advancement so great as in the knowledge of divine things. He was evidently taught of the Spirit, and daily grew in grace and every Christian virtue. His temper, which had been uniformly rough, and at times almost indomitable, became subdued and tender. At the remembrance of his sins, he would melt almost in a moment to penitence and tears; and, as he saw more and more of the Saviour, he was filled with gratitude and love. He was most obviously a new creature in Christ Jesus. The profane, drunken murderer, immured in his cell, was a broken-hearted penitent, a man of prayer. His prison now became a Bethel indeed.

It was here that I first met him: I shall never forget the day; it was the 4th of July, 1827. Having been engaged in religious services during the morning, in the

afternoon we visited the penitentiary. The prisoners were all confined to their cells, while their keepers were abroad, enjoying the freedom and recreation of the anniversary. Passing through the extended corridors, though in the midst of five hundred souls, all was silent as the grave, and no human being was visible, except here and there one leaning against the iron grate of his cell.

The chaplain conducted me to the door of Jacob's narrow apartment. He arose before its small aperture, and I had a full view of his broad African face, every line of which spoke the language of a mind and heart of no ordinary character. There was a subdued, tender, yet cheerful aspect to his countenance, as if fully conscious of what he had been, yet blessed with the conviction of a new heart, and in hope of a better state yet to come.

On learning my profession and the object of my visit, Jacob became free and cheerful in his conversation with me. While it has mostly passed from my me-

mory, the impression it left upon my mind is still vivid and affecting. He had just become able to read, with much effort, short sentences in his Bible, and was constantly engaged during his leisure hours in studying its pages. He had fully committed to memory the fifty-first psalm, and those who have heard him read or repeat that psalm will never forget the emphasis, the deep and solemn intonations of his voice, when uttering the petition, "Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation."

After conversing some time, and learning from his own lips the great change which he had experienced under the instructions here given him, I said, "Jacob, it has proved a mercy to you that you were brought to this prison." "O yes, master," he replied, "I bless God that I was brought here. I love every stone in this building."

It was his uniform custom on retiring at night from labour to the solitude of his cell, to seize his Bible, and employ the

few moments that remained of the light of day in studying its pages, in his poor way. Never did the word of God appear more precious to any one than it did to Jacob. In reply to my questions respecting his interest in the Scriptures, he said, "Master, if you will believe me, I have come into my cell at night, and setting my supper by my cot, I have taken my Bible and become so much engaged in reading and meditating upon its truths, that I wholly forgot my meal, till I saw it untouched in the morning."

To almost every Christian visitor at the prison, Jacob soon became an object of peculiar interest, as well as a favourite of the keepers. He was selected to head one of the "gangs," as they were arranged and marched from their workshops to their tables and their cells at night. Here those who were utter strangers to Jacob have been forcibly struck with the peculiar expression of his countenance and the marked dignity of his movements.

He daily secured more and more the

confidence and esteem of the chaplain and his teachers in the Sabbath-school, till they could have no doubt of his entire reformation and genuine repentance. Though his circumstances were unfavourable, and his opportunities very limited for the developement of Christian character, he was by no means deficient in the manifestation of some of the most striking traits of religious experience.

In the solitude of his cell, he learned the true nature and the value of prayer, as the great means of access to God by a Redeemer; and it was evidently the abundance of his supplication here, that laid so firmly the foundation of his whole Christian character through the remainder of his life. It was by prayer that he found the Saviour, and it was by prayer that he drew from the Bible its most precious truths and abiding consolations.

Such was Jacob's uniform deportment, his fidelity and apparent piety, that the great ends of justice were felt to be satisfied in his case, and interest was at length

made with the governor of the State to obtain his pardon for the remaining part of the time for which he was sentenced.

He was asked if he thought he would conduct himself properly if he should be released? He replied that he did not know, but he feared that he should not; adding, "unless the grace of God keep me, I know I shall not."

He had naturally a very ungovernable temper, and he feared the result of its exposure when he should be brought again into the temptations of the world. He remembered his former habits of intemperance, and he might soon be overtaken and fall. Above all, he did not forget his sinful heart, and he trembled at the thought of being again exposed to the evils of life, when freed from the restraints with which he was now surrounded. In his cell, he felt a security. In his daily abour, he met but few temptations. In his solitude, he communed alone with his own heart and his Saviour, and here he was satisfied. The place of

his confinement, was truly to him, "more like a palace than a prison."

At length his pardon was granted, and his prison door was opened. Few scenes in his whole life were so affecting as this. That cell which had been his place of anguish and of tears, his dark abode of penitence and searchings after God, where light had broken upon his mind, he had met Jesus and found peace to his soul:—that cell, his closet, his Bethel, he was now to leave forever.

Taking his Bible, the only article that belonged to him, he walked out to have his last, parting interview with his keeper and the chaplain. And it was one truly affecting to them all. He was one whom they regarded as the first fruits of their experiment upon the new plan of prison discipline. Jacob stood before them, the murderer, the ignorant, wretched African; but how changed! Intelligent in the knowledge of God, a man of prayer, blessed in the hope of eternal life. His prison garments were taken off and he

was clothed in apparel suited to the new circumstances in which he was now to appear. He received the entire approbation of the superintendent, with his advice and good wishes for his safety and success in subsequent life. The chaplain then gave him such counsel as his condition and prospects demanded, and kneeling with him, prayed that God would be his friend, his keeper and guide. The large iron door then opened before him. The keeper and the chaplain took him affectionately by the hand for the last time as an inmate of the prison, and Jacob went out, overwhelmed with emotion, as he bid adieu to these friends, and turned his eyes from the impressive memorials of his crimes and of the mercy of God to his soul.

Jacob was now to try the strength of his new principles. As he looked, the first time for years, upon the heavens and the earth, a free man, he actually felt more lonely than when buried at night in his narrow cell. His keeper had long been his friend. He had now left him,

and where would he find another as kind? The chaplain had been his constant and faithful adviser, his spiritual guide through his darkest hours: and where would he meet another so tender-hearted and so true? Who was to take this poor, desolate, long-imprisoned, but now liberated African by the hand, to befriend and watch over him? He had not a relative that he knew on earth; nor a spot that he could call his home, where to claim shelter even for a night. Putting his trust in God his Saviour, he went forth to begin the world anew: and indeed it was all new to him.

When recurring once to this event, he assured me that it was with great reluctance that he left the prison. Expressing some surprise and waiting for his reasons, he said, "I loved that place. I loved the prison, *for there I first met Jesus.*" And can we wonder that he loved it? All the useful instruction he had ever received, all the real friends he ever had, and all the good he had ever known were asso

:iated with this prison. Can we wonder that he loved it? It was the birth-place of his soul. "*Here he first met Jesus.*"

Great anxiety was felt for Jacob by all his friends, and they watched him daily to see whether he would show the same meek and quiet spirit, and as highly honour religion in the world, as he had done in his prison. He must necessarily meet the temptations of life, which might be found too strong for his, as yet untried, moral principles, and in an evil hour he might fall from his steadfastness. Of this he seemed to be well aware, and to have fortified his mind by reliance upon the grace of God. No one was apparently more alive to his own weakness and dangers.

The first year after his releasc from prison, he spent with a private gentleman in Auburn, where he fully maintained his Christian integrity. It was the wish of his friends that he should not go at once away from them, and it was equally his own desire to share their continued watch-

fulness and care, where his eye might rest upon the walls of that prison in which he first gained a knowledge of himself and the consolations of hope in his Saviour.

Being anxious to live where his religious privileges would be greater, he succeeded in gaining employment at the Theological Seminary, in the house of the steward. He soon secured the entire confidence of the family, as well as that of the students of the institution generally.

Such was the evidence he continued to give of his genuine piety and growing knowledge of religious truth, that he was soon admitted to the communion of the First Presbyterian church in Auburn. Several revivals of religion occurred in the village, during the continuance of which few were more deeply interested than Jacob. He had come out of his prison with a solemn resolution to serve God in the limited sphere of his influence, and prayer was what he chiefly relied upon. Here lay the secret of his power. Like Bunyan, he had lived upon prayer

and this had opened to him his most enrapturing visions, and drew from the word of God its most precious truths.

There was a peculiar charm, a depth and fervency in Jacob's devotional expressions. They were always marked with uncommon propriety and replete with scriptural allusions. All that knew him felt persuaded that he had communion with God and was taught by the Spirit how to pray.

There was also something peculiarly deep and clear in the whole of Jacob's religious experience, while under the instruction of the chaplain in the solitude of his cell. He heard the Bible read; prayed often and fervently, and he often received the kind sympathy and prayers of those who came to teach him the way of life. But no instructions, however evangelical, no prayers of his own or those of his Christian visiters lessened the burden of his sins. Every new truth of the gospel, and every new view of his own heart, deepened his convictions of guilt and of

his just condemnation. Nothing gave him relief or hope, till he saw Christ his substitute as a suffering *Saviour* and atoning *priest*. It was not till he came to God through the Mediator and Redeemer that he found peace. He neve forgot this scriptural method of grace, this sure way of obtaining hope by faith in the blood of the Son of God. Yet he loved his Bible as the light of his path, and he loved prayer as the appointed method of securing the spirit that giveth life and peace.

A happy illustration of his evangelical experience, of the true and proper use of the means of grace and of the nature and office of prayer, occurred during a season of special religious interest, while he resided in Auburn.

The daughter of the steward of the seminary, in whose family Jacob lived, became greatly distressed ir view of her situation as a sinner. Her minister, and many Christian friends had conversed and prayed with her, but her anxieties were

not removed. Their sympathies, with all the sources of consolation presented to her, afforded no relief to her troubled mind, but rather aggravated her sense of guilt. It was at length proposed that Jacob should be requested to converse and pray with her. He came into the room with emotions of deep interest for his young friend. There was no one for whose salvation he more earnestly prayed.

Jacob stood before the weeping girl. He knew from his own bitter experience, what she was now suffering; for, though in circumstances vastly different, the human heart is still the same, and the necessity for atoning blood is as absolute for the religiously educated and moral daughter of Christian parents, as for the vilest of convicts. The heart that never has loved God supremely, and that has virtually rejected the Saviour, is, in every instance, a heart at enmity with God, and hopeless in guilt, without the cleansing blood of Christ. Jacob had himself felt the anguish of sin, and he knew the re-

lief that a sense of pardon will afford to the wounded spirit, as it abandons its fruitless efforts to find peace anywhere but in the cross of Christ. When in deep agony of soul he had been pointed to the Saviour, his own happy experience was to him abundant proof of Christ's willingness and power to save even the chief of sinners. The suffering girl, he saw to be more in need of *faith* in Christ, than of an increased sense of sin and of her lost condition.

To bring her to the cross, he knew that every false refuge must be torn away. Instead of meeting their request to pray, calling his young friend by name, he said to her, in tones peculiarly tender and impressive, "Go and give your heart to Christ, at once," and left the room. His own experience had taught him the danger of imparting ease to the stricken soul by Christian sympathy and prayer, where there was no repentance and faith in Christ. There was conscious rectitude in

his decision and a dignity of Christian character which all felt and admired.

After securing the entire confidence of his Christian friends at Auburn, Jacob removed to the village of Canandaigua, and resided in the family of a widow lady, Mrs. M. Here he became connected with the church of which I was pastor.

My acquaintance with him was now renewed, and I was accustomed to see him almost daily, for several years. He often sought to manifest his interest in me and my family, by acts of kindness and labour, for which he would receive no compensation; feeling, as he said, that it was a privilege thus to serve Christ.

He never associated with the people of his own colour, not because he was too proud, but because their ordinary habits of feeling and life did not at all correspond with his devotional desires, and the current of his every-day thoughts and pursuits. He seemed to live at all times like one in constant communion with God,

and though entirely alone, he never appeared to be lonely, nor otherwise than contented and cheerful. Indeed, there was such an interest felt for Jacob by those who knew him, that the thought of his solitude was seldom indulged.

He had another reason for abstracting himself from the society of his own people. He remembered his former habits of life; the ease with which he had been led into temptation, and the misery and guilt which he had brought upon his soul. He was so watchful and prayerful, ever guarding against evil, that it was not known that he ever relapsed into any of his early habits, but in one solitary instance. And the very associations of this hour, throwing before his mind the long train of disastrous events through which he had passed, filled him with horror, and led him to double watchfulness against temptation, or even the appearance of evil.

Jacob had the entire charge of the house where he lived, and proved himself

faithful to every trust. Often have I seen him on the morning of the Sabbath, when the family were absent, locking the front door and putting the key in his pocket proceed to church, showing the confidence which was reposed in him by his employers, and his habits of uniform attendance upon the service of the sanctuary. Here he found his greatest pleasure. He could say, with the psalmist, "Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary, and thy law do I love." He was an attentive and an intelligent hearer of the gospel, and found his home and highest delight in the place of prayer.

Every thing now favoured his intelligent growth in grace and in all the virtues of the divine life, and probably at no time did he know more of the consolations of religion, and walk more consistently as a Christian. To many it has been a matter of surprise, that one so old, so ignorant and with so few associations, should become so uniformly devout, consistent and happy in his religious character. An in

timate acquaintance with his more private habits of reflection and religious duties, will at once remove this surprise and reveal the secret of his eminent holiness and uniform stability of Christian deportment.

Although he had often informed me of his difficulties and conversed freely as to his religious experience, I have retained nothing that so fully reveals his more secret history as the following communication from the Rev. Mr. Dwight, corresponding secretary of the Prison Discipline Society. Mr. Dwight had been deeply interested in his history and character. He had visited him frequently while in prison at Auburn, and from his own lips had written down the exercises of his mind in passing that eventful crisis in his religious history which we have already recorded. He had also repeatedly visited him while he resided in Canandaigua, and drew from him, at each interview, a detailed account of his religious experience, which he carefully preserved

Canandaigua, Oct. 2, 1839

I visited the jail in this place, in com pany with my aged and venerable friend from the Auburn prison; who is a wonderful monument of redeeming love. His Christian character and example are much admired by all who know him. The testimony of the pious lady with whom he lives, and has lived for seven years, is most decidedly in favour of his faithfulness and piety. My interview, a record of which will be found below, will speak for itself.

As we proceeded to the jail, from the house where he lived, and came upon the side-walk in that beautiful village, and every thing around us appeared bright and lovely, and our hearts burned within us toward the God of providence and grace; Jacob said, "O, Mr. Doit,* little did I think, when I saw you at my cell in the Auburn prison, that I should ever walk by your side in the streets of Canandaigua."

After we returned from the jail, and

* This was his pronunciation of the name.

had taken tea, and Jacob had attended to his duties in the garden and at the barn, and had eaten his supper, and every thing was set in order at the fire-side in his comfortable apartment, where he spent his evenings at home, Jacob came to the parlour door and said, "Mr. Doit, will you come and see Jacob now?" I gladly accepted the invitation, and took my seat by his side and made the following record of his conversation.

"Well, Jacob, do you think you love the Lord Jesus Christ?"

"I do, sir; I think I have no other object in this world or in the world to come, but my blessed Lord and Saviour."

"How does he appear to you, Jacob?"

"He appears to me, in my daily walk and conversation, the chief among ten thousand and the one altogether lovely."

"Why does he appear so to you?"

"Because he plucked me as a brand from the burning, as I hope."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Why, sir, I mean that I was a very

great sinner, and he appeared to me as a deliverer from sin. O! the mercy."

"How could he be a deliverer?"

"It is because he was the Son of God that came into the world to seek and save that which was lost."

Here he drew near to me and rested his arm upon my knee.

"Do you ever have any affecting views of his character?"

"Very often, very often. And it is my daily desire and striving to know more and more and more of his character."

"What are the views you have of him?"

"He appears to me daily as the Saviour of the world, able and willing to save all who come to God by him."

"How do others appear to you in comparison with him?"

"Nothing but chaff before the wind, and the things of the earth appear as dust compared with the glory of the Son of God."

"How can he bear to be seen by such a sinner as you and I?"

"Because he bears with us a long time

He is long-suffering and not willing that any should perish. He came to seek and to save that which was lost."

"Where is he?"

"He is in heaven and everywhere present. He is omniscient and everywhere."

"How do you know?"

"I feel his Spirit moving upon my soul every once in a while, especially when I forget him."

"When do you forget him?"

"When I let the things of the world get between my soul and him, it is not long before I miss him, and strive to find him again."

"Did you ever form any conception of his appearance?"

"His appearance?"

"Yes, of his person."

"No, sir. He appears to me sometimes by an eye of faith as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. This I saw this day."

"Where were you when you saw it his day?"

"In the woods."

"How came you to think of him?"

"Why, sir, I am always thinking of him; but the thoughts have been stronger lately. I was stooping down, picking up chips, and I thought by an eye of faith that I could see him as a Lamb. And all at once he appeared as a man dressed in white, beautiful and glorious."*

"What did you do?"

"The first that I knew, tears came into my eyes, and I went and fell down on my knees, and every thing appeared joyful and glorious; even the trees of the field."

"Then what next?"

"Why, sir, I got my load and came home; and it appeared to me that I was

* Jacob did not intend by this expression to convey the idea that there was to him any visible appearance, emblematic of his Saviour, but that the scriptural representations of his tenderness and glory were so strongly impressed upon his mind, that the images there drawn were to his perception like living realities to the natural eye. He never exhibited the slightest evidence of superstition or fanaticism under any circumstances.

comforted all the way home, till I got into the gate here and saw you."

"Well, how did you feel after you saw me?"

"After I saw you the thoughts of my Saviour vanished from my mind, and I did not know you, but your countenance seemed to be familiar. When I came to find you out, I went to the barn and fell down on my knees, and blessed God for the privilege of seeing you again; and I believe the Saviour was there with me. I am led to be astonished, Mr. Doit, many a time, that God has had compassion on me, and sent his Son to raise me from the depths of sin and degradation; and many a time I look upon myself and see my own heart, I feel that I deserve to be banished from his presence and the glory of his power."

"Why don't he banish you?"

"Because he desires that I should be saved."

"What gives you this feeling of unworthiness?"

"Looking back upon my past life and feeling my hell-desert; deserving nothing but the bottomless pit; and this brings me to feel that nothing but the grace of God has kept me till this day."

"You often speak of feeling so heavy Jacob, what do you mean by that?"

"So heavy?"

"You spoke of it this morning, as having that feeling before you went into the woods."

"O, yes, when I look back and see my sins; when the Lord takes away his Spirit from me, and leaves me to myself, then I feel very *heavy* and distressed by my sin and guilt, till the Saviour appears to me again by his Spirit, and I feel like a new man, and I feel that my Saviour has come to me and raises me up, and puts joy and gladness into my heart, and causes me to feel light and joyful. I have often felt that if I was left to myself, if it was not for the grace of God and his Spirit, that I should go into despair, and sink in despair."

"How do you get rid of these feelings of despondency, Jacob?"

"Fall down at his feet and never give *him* rest till he gives *me* rest by his Spirit."

"Fall down at his feet?"

"Fall down at the foot of the cross and pray for his mercy and the enlightening influence of his Spirit."

"Fall down, you say?"

"Kneel down, I mean by falling down."

"Do you commonly do that when you pray?"

"Yes; but then I am always looking to God, when I am working on any thing."

"Does it do you good to kneel down to pray?"

"It does; I have found along back that I have let the world and business stop me when I have been pressed by the Spirit to go and pray, and I have found lately that the only way that I can obtain the Spirit of God, at all times, is to pray often."

"How often?"

"That is to say, set apart three times a day, and let nothing prevent."

"Three times a day? Any particular place?"

"In the barn when I am about home if not, in the woods. No worldly object shall stop me when I am pressed by the Spirit of God; and if I cannot go this moment, the Lord will make a way for me to go the next."

"You speak much of the Spirit of God pressing you."

"Yes; driving me to do my duty to my Master."

"What measures do you use to have the movings of the Spirit upon your soul?"

"When I feel that I am left alone by the Spirit, I pray for the Spirit, and the Lord, according to the promise, sends his Spirit to comfort the mourning, weeping sinner."

"Does the Bible help you any about this?"

"O, yes; the Bible is my guide and

my chart. It is a light to my feet and a lamp to my path."

Mr. Dwight had often requested Jacob to read the Scriptures to him, an exercise in which he was peculiarly impressive He always used his own Bible: "*that Bible*" which first opened his eyes to the true light. This Bible Mr. Dwight had asked Jacob to give to him as a memorial of the power of the truth in saving such a sinner. Jacob uniformly declined, expressing his strong attachment to this companion of his prison hours. In the present conversation, Mr. Dwight renewed his request for the Bible, but he found that it had lost nothing of its interest and value in the estimation of Jacob. It had not only consoled him in the solitude of his cell, but had prepared him to become a free man indeed, and now walked forth with him, "a light unto his feet and a lamp unto his path." He had read it in course seven times, and he uniformly perused the chapter from which the text was taken of every sermon he heard.

It is said that he always laid this Bible upon his pillow while he slept, that he might not only meditate upon it in the night watches, but find it as the light of his eyes at the dawn of day.

Continuing the conversation, Mr. Dwight said:—

"Now, Jacob, about that Bible which I have asked you so often to give me!"

"Well, master, that Bible is as dear to me as my own soul almost, because it always shows me my duty to God; and shows to me the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."

"Well, but *that* Bible in particular, *that old Bible?*"

"Well, I do not know about any other Bible; I never read any other. It always reminds me of my friends, and shows me what I am by nature and what I must be by grace, before I am fitted for the kingdom of God."

"But any other Bible shows you the same."

"Yes, sir, it does; but because it was

given to me in the prison, I seem to be more touched with it, because out of it I found relief from my sins, and rest to my soul; out of *that very same Bible.*"

"So you cannot let me have it."

"No, master, I would let you have it if I could go with you, so that I could read it every night and morning. But even if I would give it to you, you would not have it, you would not take it from me."

"If I left you a new one, and a better one—and a larger print?"

"It would not answer. Mr. Curtis led me on by *that* Bible. Mr. Curtis led me to the feet of Jesus out of *that same* Bible, and by Mr. Curtis leading me by *that Bible*, I saw by the 51st psalm, and the 55th chapter of Isaiah; the 51st psalm condemned me to eternal death and there was no help for me, and by the 55th chapter of Isaiah I found relief to my soul."

Mr. Dwight had been long and unweariedly devoted to the improvement of

prison discipline, and regarding Jacob as among the first and happiest results of that system which he had been chiefly instrumental in introducing to many of our penitentiaries, he became greatly interested in his history. He had formed an exalted conception of his character as a Christian, and cherished profound admiration for his superior order of mind. In this he was not alone. The most casual observer was struck with the superior manliness and dignity of his deportment; and Judge Van Ness, when pronouncing his sentence of death, said to him, "You possess a more than ordinary strength of mind. Providence has blessed you with a memory without a parallel in all my experience."

Mr. Dwight has often remarked that no human tongue ever read the word of God in his hearing in tones so impressive, and with emphasis so solemn and appropriate. Whenever he visited Jacob, he was accustomed to request him to lead in prayer, and he remarked that he never fel

drawn nearer to God, or more impressed with the coldness and feebleness of his own devotional exercises, than when attempting to follow this eminent servant of God. No one ever united with him without feeling similar emotions.

Jacob was not only a constant attendant upon the appointments of the church of which he was a member, but he often lead in devotional exercises when requested to do so. In those services he engaged without the slightest appearance of pride. On the contrary, his public exercises as well as his whole deportment were characterized uniformly with the most humble spirit. At the same time, there was a propriety, a richness and a glow of devotion in his services, that showed alike the superior order of his mind and the deep piety of his heart. I shall never forget one prayer-meeting in particular. It was held at the house where he lived. After several others had led in the devotional exercises of the evening, all of whom had received the advantages

of education, and exhibited nothing inappropriate or defective in the character of their petitions, Jacob was asked to pray. Kneeling before us, he led our devotions in a manner so appropriate, so solemn, so tender, subdued and scriptural, that all which preceded seemed cold, formal and heartless. There was such apparent nearness to God, such great familiarity with the service of prayer, such breathing of a heavenly spirit, that in following him myself, I felt like treading on hallowed ground. In this exercise beyond all others he was most at home and happy. Indeed, there was often a majesty of thought in his prayers that gave a magnificent richness to the drapery that clothed them, till in listening to the glowing language of his supplications, I have often been reminded of the power of piety and the Spirit of God as illustrated in the inspiration of truth, where the clearness and sacredness of the subject forbid the use of any other than the most appropriate and impressive language. He had learn-

ed the necessity and value of prayer from the Bible, and thence, too, he had at first drawn the finest thoughts and language with which to approach the mercy-seat.

It was not only in social prayer that he manifested his communion with God and his deep interest in the cause of religion. His habits of secret prayer were well known to the family with whom he lived, and probably few Christians were ever more constant and punctual in the duties of the closet. No labours of the day found him too weary or unfitted for prayer at night. He could say with the psalmist of Israel, "As for me, I will call upon God and the Lord shall save me: evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice."

Those who often overheard the earnest pleadings of his heart in his closet, were assured, that it was not alone his own "poor soul" of which he so often spoke, but the salvation of others; the state of the family and the church, and the glory

of God that burdened his heart. He wrestled with God like the patriarchs of old, and he rose early, like the Saviour, to renew his vows and his service of devotion. The same comprehensiveness and fervour, propriety and directness of expression, characterized all his religious exercises, and those that read his history were at no loss to discover the secret of his piety and the source of his abiding consolation.

There was always something remarkable in his whole deportment and carriage. While his stature was manly and erect, his movement strikingly dignified and commanding, and in his intercourse nothing servile and low, there was at the same time a winning modesty, a just appreciation of himself. And while he made no claim to the kind regard and attention of others, he was never ungrateful for their condescension to his low estate.

He never seemed to know that his mind was at all superior to that of others

who had grown up in ignorance, or that in any respect he was more deserving of attention. He was never known to complain of neglect, but often expressed his surprise and gratitude that his friends should remember "old black Jacob," as he was accustomed to call himself.

His humility was most of all manifested in his estimate of himself as a sinner. He never alluded to the history of his early life, or to his crimes, but with emotions the most deep and painful, and with expressions of the greatest self-abhorrence. In allusion to the character of the man that was murdered, he once remarked, "His conduct was no justification for me;" and though his act would not alone have proved fatal, yet he never felt himself any thing but a murderer, nor denied the justness of the sentence that condemned him to the gallows.

To the chaplain of the prison, he once said, "The man in the next cell to me always prays with his face toward the grate in the door, but," pointing to the re

motest part of his cell, he added, "away down in that corner is the best place for me." In all my acquaintance with him, I never discovered the slightest symptoms of spiritual pride.

When I left him for another and distant field of labour, his heart was too full to bid me farewell; and when he received another minister, his affections seemed to be divided between us, and he would unite us in his petitions at the throne of grace with peculiar tenderness. At one time, after imploring blessings upon the church and its pastor, he added, "Now let thy Spirit, Lord, be with our former minister; let him feel in his *soul* at this *moment*, that his old people are praying for him."

All my subsequent interviews with Jacob have only served to strengthen my confidence in his piety, and to increase my admiration of his character as a Christian and a man. And nothing has ever occurred since my removal from him to shake the confidence of others in his

stability and devotion to the cause of his Master. Indeed, he was regarded by his pastor and by the whole church, as an eminent Christian, daily growing in grace and seeking to render himself useful in the humble and limited sphere of his influence.

My successor at Canandaigua, the Rev. Mr. Thompson, has informed me that in a recent revival of religion in that place, Jacob was peculiarly animated and refreshed. "I have often thought," he says, "that Jacob shared more largely in its blessings than any of us. Perhaps in this he was receiving his earthly reward, for no one could more justly claim to have been the favoured instrument of that work, than himself. His mind had been remarkably exercised for a long time, and for months his intense anxiety for the religious state of the people had been manifest in his prayers and in his whole conversation. Late in the winter of 1840 we were blessed with the evident indications of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Attendance upon the means of grace became much increased, and some were found anxiously inquiring for the way of life. A day was set apart for fasting and special prayer. We met in the lecture room at noon. The meeting was full, but it was heavy and lifeless. Just before dismissing the congregation, with feelings of deep depression and discouragement, I turned to Jacob and asked him if he had nothing to say to us? He rose instantly, saying, 'Yes, master.' And a more eloquent address than that which followed, if I may judge from my present recollection of it, or from the effect which it produced, I do not think ever fell from the lips of a mortal. I wish I could recall it He began somewhat in this way, as he rose in answer to my invitation, 'Yes, master. When I was praying in my chamber, this morning, and trying to get ready for this meeting, it seemed to me just as if my Saviour spake to me, and said, 'Jacob, I want you to speak for me to-day to the people; and now, my dear

masters and mistresses, for I dare not call you my brethren and sisters.' He then spoke in most humiliating terms of himself, apologizing apparently for saying anything. He alluded distantly to his own previous history, and spoke of what he deemed his present insignificance in the church and in society; but nevertheless, he sought us to hear him, for the sake of Jesus. 'Not for my sake,' said he, 'for I am nobody, nothing but a withered and dry *old leaf* of the vine, away, *away off*, lying out on the ground. And now, my masters and mistresses, let a poor old black African entreat you to come up to the help of the Lord.'

"I can only say," adds Mr. Thompson, "that the effect which followed Jacob's address, was overwhelming. The very house seemed to rock where we were. All wept, and many sobbed aloud.

"When he concluded, summing up all, by saying, 'Now the question is, will you obey God—will you be for him—will you rise and work?' I do not believe that

there was a heart in the house which did not earnestly respond, 'We will obey God, we will be *for* him.'

"Two weeks did not elapse before the house of God was thronged with inquiring souls, and more than one hundred in our own congregation were the hopeful subjects of grace.

"Jacob, during the entire progress of that work, and indeed at all times, was an earnest labourer for the conversion of souls. He attended every meeting for religious inquiry, and, taking his seat in a remote corner of the room, passed the time in silent prayer. One evening, when the people generally had retired, my attention was attracted by a very earnest voice at the door. I supposed that some one was engaged in prayer. I soon found Jacob holding on literally to the skirts of a poor old woman, imploring her not to leave the place till she had accepted of Christ. I never heard such earnest pleading. He was indeed 'beseeching her with tears.'"

At this time Jacob seemed to be bap-

tized with a new spirit, and the salvation of souls was the subject of his thoughts, his prayers and his efforts. On passing from the house of worship, one evening, he observed a company of young ladies from the seminary, many of whom he knew to be deeply solicitous for their salvation. Modestly approaching them, he poured forth the feelings of his soul for them, in alternate exhortation to them and prayers to God that they might believe and live. "Do, do, dear youth," he cried, "repent of your sins and go to the Saviour. Go now. Don't delay. He will accept you. Paul was a great sinner and he was accepted, and so you may be." Reminded by his minister that it was time for him to retire, he turned from this interesting circle of youth, raising a most impressive ejaculation to God for their salvation.

His efforts were not confined or limited here. Remembering his own ignorance and degradation, and knowing the power of the gospel of the grace of God, he despaired of the salvation of no one, however

ignorant and degraded. He was accustomed to visit certain families that most other Christians had overlooked, as if they had long and by common consent been abandoned to the ways of unrighteousness. One family in particular excited his interest. They were notoriously hardened and degraded in sin. Jacob, taking his own Bible in his hand, would spend evening after evening at their own house, reasoning with them out of the Scriptures and urging, in his modest yet earnest way, the importance of their reformation and repentance. They had wholly neglected the Bible, and seldom if ever attended religious service at the house of God. He would spend hours in reading to them the Scriptures, and beseech them to go with him to the place of public prayer. He seemed determined not to relinquish his object, but pressed upon them, almost daily, the value of religion. His labours were not in vain. The son, perhaps the most unpromising of all, became awakened to his lost and ruined condition. In his gross darkness and

deep distress, he came at once to Jacob for advice. Jacob could only encourage him to resolute efforts and point him to Christ. He went with him to the meeting for inquiry and to his minister, till ultimately he was numbered among the hope fully converted. The mother soon became interested for her own salvation, and was at length brought to embrace the offers of life in the Redeemer. The father was next apparently reached by the Spirit of God, through the labours of their faithful friend Jacob. The mother and son are now members of the church, and the father is greatly changed in his habits of life, if not actually renewed by the Spirit of God. How many others may be found at last, saved through the humble labours of this praying African, is known only to him who blesses the feeblest efforts of his saints.

Jacob's sense of gratitude and his love for his friends were uncommonly ardent and strong, and I never heard of an expression of unkindness falling from his lips. To his last hours, he could not speak

of the superintendent and chaplain of the prison at Auburn but with tears of thankful and affectionate remembrance. Of Mr. Dwight, who so often visited him both in prison and after his release, he always spoke in terms of ardent attachment, calling him uniformly "My friend Mr. Doit." To him he consented to bequeath his "prison Bible," as he called it, when he should die. While every thing was manly and decorous, there was a touching tenderness and warmth of interest and love for his ministers and those Christian friends who were accustomed to see him most often and to inquire after his spiritual prosperity.

Last summer I requested him to give me the history of his whole life. At first he hesitated and positively declined, saying, "It distresses me to think of it." And his whole frame seemed to tremble, as his eye rested upon me, as if he was astonished that I should ask him to rehearse his crimes. I told him it might do good, and that I would make no improper use of it. He then consented, and went

minutely into his whole history, which corresponded with great accuracy to the records of the court in which he was tried for murder, and the sketches which have been preserved of his life and religious experience while in prison.

Could all that he said, warmed with the emotion with which it was uttered, be written down just as it fell from his lips, could some pencil paint the varied expressions of his care-worn and sable countenance, with the beamings and tears of his expressive eye; the suppressed heavings of his heart, with his marked gratitude for grace and mercy, no one could doubt that Jacob Hodges was a man of penitence, a man of prayer, a man of God. I never was more impressed and overawed by the dignity of Christian character, or saw more distinctly drawn the living symbols of the grace of God.

This interview seemed to call forth afresh his confidence in me as his friend and adviser, and to secure warmer attachment. As I was leaving the place, Jacob

came running to the carriage, to bid farewell to his master and mistress, as he called us. We saw him then for the last time.

In February following, he was taken sick and suddenly died. And though no earthly relations were near him, many felt that they had lost an unwavering, Christian friend. The church saw one of her best and most useful members removed.

The day he was buried was intensely cold and stormy. Some of the most respectable gentlemen of the village bore him to his grave, while others felt it a privilege and honour to attend him to his resting-place among the dead. A friend and neighbour placed a silver plate upon his coffin, with the inscription,—

(JACOB HODGES, A RESPECTABLE COLOURED MAN, AGED EIGHTY.)

He rests from his labours, and his works do follow him.

On the Sabbath following Jacob's decease, the Rev. Mr. Thompson, who succeeded the author in the pastoral relation

at Canandaigua, paid the following tribute to the memory of this servant of Christ.

"Two weeks ago to-morrow Jacob spent not less than two hours with me in my study. We had much conversation in relation to himself. Among other things, he said, and from the connexion in which he said it, I know that it was not in the spirit of boasting, 'I have now lived ten years in Canandaigua: every body knows black Jacob, at least by sight, and I challenge all, men, women and children, to say, if I have ever injured any body, or done anything inconsistent with my profession, except that I have not been as humble and as much like my blessed Master as I ought to have been: and this I know better than anybody can tell me; and I am ashamed and mourn for it.' This was saying much; more, I fear, than many of us dare say; but we must all confess that it was a safe challenge for Jacob.

"Some things I would particularly say

of him, as furnishing examples well worthy of imitation.

"*He was a man of prayer.* He began his Christian course with a strong sense of his dependence upon God; perhaps there was something in the peculiar difficulties which he had to overcome, that led him in a peculiar manner to realize this truth; certain it is that he did realize it more than almost any other Christian I ever knew; and as a necessary consequence, he prayed more than most other Christians. Those of you who have heard his eloquent pleadings with God in the prayer-meeting, need no other evidence that the exercise was a familiar one. How often has the remark been made, that one of Jacob's prayers was enough to change the character of an otherwise dull and spiritless meeting. How full and fervent were his petitions! How near to the throne he always seemed to get. Think that it was not till he was in prison that he learned to read; then remember how chosen was his language,

how exceedingly fine it was sometimes; how apt and abundant were his quotations from Scripture; how well he would adapt himself in prayer to the peculiar circumstances of the time, and you must be convinced that he was thoroughly practised in the duty.

"*Jacob was a very humble Christian.* You may say that he had much reason to be humble; so had he many temptations to be proud. You know with what marked respect he has always been treated among us, and he was the object of very general interest, so that strangers, visiting the place, have sought to be introduced to him. Many times I have been apprehensive that he would be injured by the attentions which he received, but I never discovered that he was. He did not seem disposed, on any occasion, to put himself improperly forward, or anxious to attract notice. The memory of what he had been seemed always to be present with him. Many of you will remember that thrilling scene in our lecture room, a year

ago, just previous to our precious revival: when as we were about to separate under most disheartening circumstances, Jacob was invited to address us. You have not forgot that truly eloquent and overwhelming appeal which seemed to shake the very house in which we were assembled, while the whole congregation was convulsed with weeping. You remember the words with which he began: 'My masters and mistresses, for I dare not call you my brethren and sisters.' There was breathed the spirit of the man, and I never knew him to appear to cherish any other.

"There was a peculiarity in his prayers which you must have noticed. In that part of them which consisted of confession, he always used the first person singular. He seemed to think that his confession of sin could only be appropriate for himself. He often alluded to the past with expressions of the most profound abhorrence and shame. Sometimes he spoke of his crime, but it was always with such evident pain, that it was dis-

tressing even to hear him. I have seen him seized with violent trembling at the bare mention of that subject.

"He has said to me, 'Master, I do believe that my heavenly Father loves me, but how wonderful it is that he should love me. I cannot love myself: it seems to me that nobody ever sinned against him as I have done."

"*Jacob was an earnest Christian.* He was constantly examining himself. Every sermon he heard, he sought to apply someway as a test of his own character; and he was never satisfied unless he saw evidence that he was growing in grace. To this end, he was diligent in his use of all the means of grace. Until his health began to fail, during the present season, he was very rarely absent from any religious meeting; and his familiarity with the Scriptures, acquired by the constant perusal of them, was truly wonderful. When I have met him and inquired after his health, nothing was more common than for him to reply in some such terms

as these; showing the channel in which his thoughts habitually flowed. 'Very well, master, in body, but O this wicked heart; I want a great deal more grace.' He complained much of a disposition to *worldliness.* 'His little matters of business engrossed so much of his attention, he was compelled,' he said, 'to pray continually against it. He wondered how rich Christians *could* keep along'

"*Jacob was a useful Christian.* Such a one could hardly be otherwise. It may be said of him, 'He hath done what he could.' There are not a few in this village who owe their conversion, under God, to his faithfulness, and I doubt not there are many who are ready to rise up and call him blessed.

"His uniform and consistent life of piety cannot but have had a happy influence on all who observed him. He loved and longed to do good. I once asked him why he was so anxious to be rendering services to me, for he was constantly inquiring if he could not do something for

me. His reply was, that it seemed almost the same as if he was preaching the gospel, when he was helping his minister.

"There is an anecdote of him, highly illustrative of his character, which, though a proper place has not seemed to occur for it in this hurried sketch, I am unwilling to omit, because it shows so strikingly his feelings on a subject, in relation to which every Christian ought continually to examine himself. Some two years ago he had a violent attack of the same disorder (inflammation of the lungs) of which he died; and it was supposed then that he could not recover. In one of the many delightful interviews which I had with him, I recollect to have asked him this question, 'Are you quite sure, Jacob, that you hate sin?' I never can forget the earnestness of his manner, and the peculiar expression of his eye, as he rose up quick in his bed and stretching out his arms, exclaimed, 'Master, I do hate my very flesh on account of sin.'

'His death, at the time it occurred, was

anticipated but a very few hours I saw him on Monday, and had much conversation with him, though without any suspicion of the nearness of his end. He referred to the lectures which I had been delivering weekly, for some months' past on Christian experience, and said they had been greatly serviceable to him. He told me that he had been led by them to go over the whole ground again, and to examine himself, to use his own language, 'all over anew, from beginning to end, to see whether he was on the sure foundation.

"'Well, Jacob,' I said, 'and what is your conclusion?'

"'I think,' he replied, 'that it is all right, master.'

"'Then you think,' I continued, 'that you are running no risk, if you die now?'

"'Not any,' was his prompt reply, 'Christ is able and faithful.'

"To one who went into his room, the last morning of his life, to ask how he

felt, and if he needed any thing, he simply said, 'O, I want more grace in my heart.'

"His last hours were passed in a state of unconscious stupor, and at six o'clock in the evening, he expired."

About two weeks after the remains of Jacob had been buried, the credulous coloured people of the village circulated reports that his body had been removed from the grave for the purpose of dissection. To silence this conjecture, his grave was opened. His coffin was found undisturbed, and as the shroud was unfolded from his cold remains, he was reposing in the sweet sleep of death, awaiting the resurrection of the just.

I have recently returned from the place of his residence, and from a visit to his grave. I felt that I was standing amid many of the congregation to which, for years, I had proclaimed the gospel of Christ. The oldest, and many of the best of the church were sleeping around me, and yet among them all, there was none who, for ardent piety, for simple faith, for

an humble, holy walk with God, had gone to the grave with brighter evidence of meeting Christ at his coming in glory, than Jacob Hodges.

In the month of May last, the anni versary of the American Prison Discipline Society was held in the city of Boston I was invited to be present, in conse quence of my past relation and intimate acquaintance with Jacob.

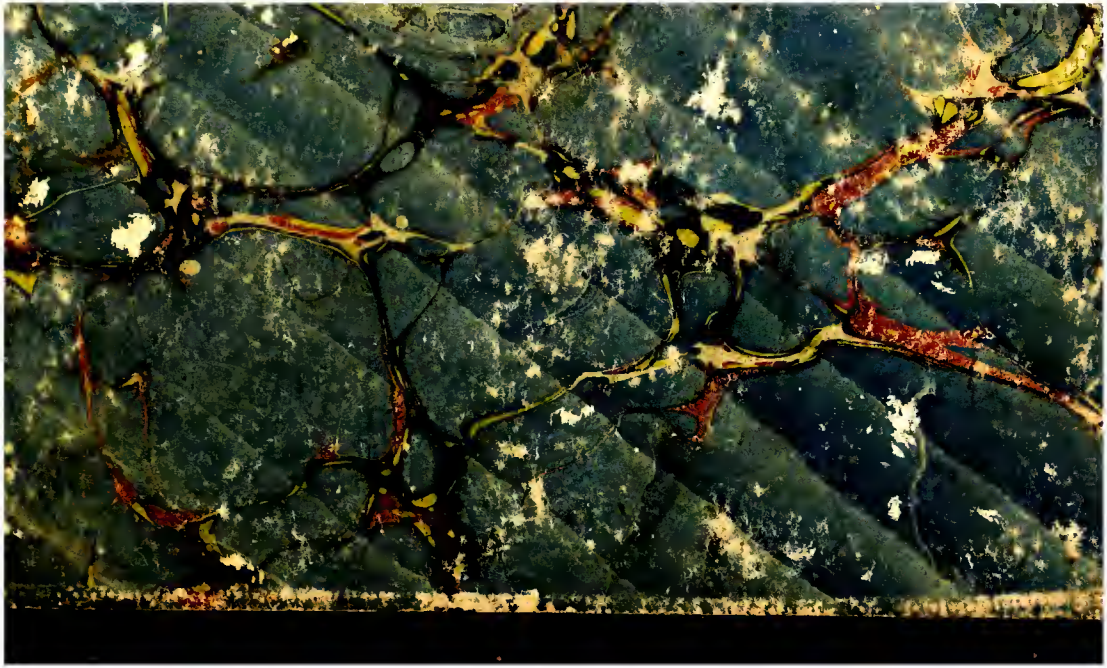
Jacob's "prison Bible," which he had bequeathed to his friend, Mr. Dwight, arrived just before the exercises were commenced. This was the Bible which had been the only companion of his dreary cell. The only book he ever read. *That Bible*, which had rested by his head while he slept, "that had guided him to Christ; dear to him almost as his own soul." It was held up before a crowded congregation; it demanded no superstitious reverence, as a consecrated relic, but deeply impressed upon every beholder the preciousness and power of the truth

of God to enlighten the blinded, to guide the erring and to save the lost.

Christian respect and affection have ordered a tomb-stone to be erected at the grave of Jacob, to bear the following inscription:

JACOB HODGES,

AN AFRICAN NEGRO,

Born to poverty and ignorance:
Early tempted to sin by designing and wicked men
Once condemned as a felon:
Converted by the grace of God, in prison:
Lived many years a consistent and useful Christian.
Died, Feb. 1842,
In the faith of the gospel,
Aged about 80 *years.*

THE END.